

Geopark Ore of the Alps



Highlights:

Gainfeld Waterfall

Johanna Mine

Hochgründeck

Larzenbach Mine

Liechtenstein Gorge

Iglsbachtal Valley

Keltenloch

Sunnpau Mine

Barbara Canyon

Troyboden High Moor

Where do I find the Geopark?

“Ore of the Alps” Geopark lies in the heart of Austria, in the Pongau district of Salzburg. It includes the communities of Bischofshofen, Mühlbach am Hochkönig, St. Veit im Pongau and Hüttau. The River Salzach cuts right through the Geopark, with the Hochgründeck, the highest mountain in the so-called “Grass Alps” and site of the Heinrich Kiener Haus, standing directly across from the Hochkönig massif and the Matrashaus, at almost 3,000 meters above sea level.

Ore of the Alps: “Feel the history!”

UNESCO Global Geopark “Ore of the Alps” (“Erz der Alpen”) lies 50 km south of Salzburg *City of Mozart* in the “Innergebirg” region. The Geopark covers an area of 211 km², divided between the four communities mentioned above. Human settlement of the region, not least due to its wealth of natural resources, goes back to the Copper- and Bronze Ages. Geologically, the Geopark is located almost entirely in the greywacke zone (Paleozoic, clastic rock with sedimented minerals). A small section in the north of the Geopark belongs to the Northern Limestone Alps, and another in the south to the Central Alps (northern extent of the Hohe Tauern). The most significant rocks of the three geological zones are greywacke, slate and phyllite, limestone and dolomite. These are often overlaid by Ice Age sedimentation caused by the Salzach Glacier.

As might be expected, the geomorphology of the region is equally diverse. Steep walls of reef limestone, waterfalls, canyons, springs, rockslide debris, earthen pillars, terraces, cirque tarns, rounded knobs etc. can all be found. The plateau of the Hochkönig (2941 m) remains covered by a glacier (“Übergossene Alm”) to this day. What makes the Geopark truly unique is its ore deposits. Mining for copper, as well as for iron and gold, shaped life here for over 5,000 years. The Mitterberg outside Mühlbach grew into the European center of Bronze Age copper mining. The copper used in the “Sky Disc of Nebra” has been shown to have come from mines within the Geopark. Today, mining in the Geopark is a thing of the past, though in the “Ore of the Alps” this history lives on in fascinating mines and museums.



Activities and Offers

Visitor center at the ski-jump grounds & Waterfall Path, Bischofshofen

www.bischofshofen.com



The newly built visitor center is located on the grounds of the world-famous ski jump. There you can learn important facts about the Geopark, while also visiting the fascinating ore mine as well as a special exhibition which changes from year to year. We suggest combining this visit with a tour of the ski jump, a hike to Gainfeld Waterfall, and a hearty meal at the Austria House.

Larzenbach Copper Mine and Mineral Museum, Hütttau

www.kupferzeche.at



The green color, which catches our eyes time and again, is from copper, which is dissolved and transported by the water, sometimes even forming minute green dripstones. Though copper hasn't been mined here for a long time, you can still gain a good impression of the ores still to be found deep below ground in Salzburg. You will also learn all about the arduous living- and working conditions endured by medieval miners.

Sunnpau Mine and Heritage Museum, St. Veit im Pongau

www.schaubergwerk-sunnpau.at



In barely an hour, you will be able to experience first-hand some 4,000 years of mining history. From its pre-historic beginnings which involved stone mallets, wooden wedges and setting fires, to full-fledged ore mining with iron bars and hammers, and ultimately the days of black powder. The origins of this mine presumably go back to the Neolithic Period – one of the oldest mines in all of Salzburg. The “Great Hall” is a highlight of the tour.

Liechtenstein Gorge, St. Johann

www.liechtensteinklamm.at



Keeping to excellently built boardwalks and paths, you will wind your way through the Liechtensteinklamm, a gorge in which the Grossarler Ache has cut through the extremely hard limestone in spectacular fashion. The walkways extend for about 1 km and are easy to navigate. However, you will have to deal with a few stairs at the far end, making the gorge unsuitable for prams of wheelchairs. The tour takes about 1 – 1.5 hours.

Knappenheim Mining Museum and Johanna Mine, Mühlbach am Hochkönig

www.museum-hochkoenig.com



Various traces and archaeological finds point to a prehistoric industrial center that thrived over a period of 1700 years, from around 2000 to 800 B.C. At over 190 documented smelting locations, you can even find slag that is 4,000 years old! For around 2,000 years thereafter, this ancient mine deep beneath the Mitterberg in Mühlbach remained hidden from man. But then, in 1827, something happened that sounds like the stuff of legend. You are certain to be astonished by the story!

